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# Reagan Doctrine: Watershed Legacy

## President Leaves His Mark With Aid to 'Freedom Fighters' Around World

By SARA FRITZ, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—What began several years ago when President Reagan penciled the words "freedom fighters" into the margins of a staff-written speech is now being heralded in Congress and elsewhere as a watershed in U.S. foreign policy: a firm pledge that the United States will come to the aid of Third World anti-Communist resistance groups around the globe.

While attention has focused on the President's controversial \$100-million program for the Nicaraguan *contras*, millions of dollars in U.S. military aid—guns, boots, ammunition and, in some cases, deadly Stinger shoulder-held anti-aircraft missiles—are quietly flowing to rebel groups battling Soviet-backed governments in Afghanistan, Angola and Cambodia.

Reagan portrays these rebel groups as "freedom fighters" engaged in a global struggle by Western nations to roll back the 1970s expansion of Soviet influence

### THE REAGAN DOCTRINE Funding Anti-Communist Rebels

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in the Third World. Critics portray it as a dangerous policy that will eventually draw U.S. troops into another protracted war like Vietnam.

The policy has been so closely identified with the President that supporters and critics alike now refer to it as the "Reagan Doctrine."

"We seek to give effective support to those who have taken the initiative to resist Marxist-Leninist dictatorship so they can struggle for freedom," the President said recently. "It is justified because of the threat that these regimes pose to their neighbors, our allies and friends and our own national security."

Beginning with the commitment of a few million dollars shortly after Reagan took office in 1981, the annual cost to U.S. taxpayers has skyrocketed to what congress-

sional sources estimate to be several billion dollars—more than \$500 million of it being spent covertly in the current fiscal year by the CIA.

#### Hired Lobbyists

The Reagan Doctrine has gained so much momentum that representatives of a variety of Third World counterinsurgencies now flock to Washington for frequent meetings. Some have hired high-priced professional lobbying firms to persuade Congress and the Administration of their need for sustained U.S. financial support.

In addition to those in Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Angola and Cambodia, anti-communist insurgencies in three other countries—Ethiopia, Mozambique and Laos—have requested U.S. aid but are not believed to be receiving any.

In Congress, Republicans led by Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) are drafting legislation that would inscribe the Reagan Doctrine into law. And even congressional opponents of the policy, such as Rep. Stephen J. Solarz (D-N.Y.), have expressed support for the concept in some instances.

The policy already is having an impact on Soviet behavior by increasing the burden on Moscow in

its support of beleaguered client governments in Managua, Kabul, Luanda and Phnom Penh, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.) said.

"Clearly, we have imposed costs upon the Soviets," Lugar declared. "It's not as easy for them to operate as it was. They know there are risks, and they have to recalculate future adventures."

Yet critics claim that the Reagan Doctrine is little more than a loose collection of unrelated programs that have been undertaken without a clear or consistent policy objective. Even staunch supporters of the program, such as Sen. Gordon J. Humphrey (R-N.H.), complain that some of its aspects have been poorly managed.

#### Constitutional Authority

Perhaps the toughest challenge to the policy has been posed by those of both parties in Congress who contend that the President does not have authority under the U.S. Constitution to conduct secret, undeclared wars around the globe.

"The Constitution does not permit a secret war, does it?" House Intelligence Committee Chairman Lee H. Hamilton (D-Ind.) asked. "So I'm with the Constitution."

Nor has the President succeeded in calming the fears of Hamilton and other Democrats who predict that U.S. support for the "freedom fighters" will only force the Soviets to step up their assistance to the governments under siege, drawing the United States into a no-win military quagmire reminiscent of Vietnam.

Neither the President nor any of his top foreign policy advisers have ever used the term "Reagan Doctrine." But the label, which originated with a tiny core group of conservative intellectuals who long have been lobbying to make it a permanent element of U.S. foreign policy, has taken hold among members of Congress, international scholars and U.S. allies.

Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, an early advocate of the policy, said the Reagan Doctrine developed from the President's own view of the world.

"Where there are people in closed systems seeking to emancipate themselves from a tyrannical government and/or a Soviet-supported government, the President has always felt that the United

States should stand with them," she said. "The President began to get this position into his speeches, and he wrote it in himself. There was never a formal meeting of the National Security Planning Group or a National Security Decision Directive."

Kirkpatrick recalls that the bureaucracy initially was hostile to the idea.

"It took a while for his commitment to make itself felt in the government," she said. "'The Building'—as they call the State Department—didn't necessarily share his views."

A turning point came on Nov. 23, 1981, when Reagan signed National Security Decision Directive 17 and notified Congress that he had decided to assist the Nicaraguan rebels with an initial commitment of nearly \$20 million.

The rebel groups themselves were slow to take full advantage of this change in policy in Washington.

In 1981, when Angolan rebel Jonas Savimbi initially came to Washington in hope of capitalizing on Reagan's expressed commitment to "freedom fighters," his encounters with top Administration officials were unpublicized and unproductive.

"Anybody in the Administration who did see him did it very privately," Kirkpatrick said.

At that time, the Administration was still specifically prohibited from aiding the Angolan resistance by a statute known as the Clark Amendment, which had been adopted by Congress in 1976, at the height of the isolationist mood that followed the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.

It was not until 1985, when Savimbi hired the well-connected GOP consulting firm of Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelly at a cost of \$600,000 a year, that any of these Third World rebel groups began to show First World political savvy.

With the help of his public relations consultants, Savimbi returned triumphantly to Washington earlier this year for a highly publicized Oval Office chat with the President and a pledge of \$15 million in covert U.S. assistance. By that time, Congress had repealed the Clark Amendment.

Savimbi also had help from Dole and several other Republican senators, who brought considerable pressure on the Administration to assist his Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

Because the money came from CIA contingency funds, it required no explicit vote of approval by Congress.

While the United States had quietly been supplying some aid to the Afghan resistance ever since the Soviet invasion in 1979, these amounts began to increase dramati-

cally under the Reagan Administration. In this instance too, members of Congress such as Rep. Charles Wilson (D-Tex.) and Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.) took the lead in helping to make increased funds available to the Administration through the CIA budget.

Since then, the U.S. commitment to the Afghan rebels has risen to about \$480 million in covert military aid during the current fiscal year alone, a sum that dwarfs existing assistance programs for most seated governments. It is, for example, nearly five times the amount that the Administration has budgeted for military aid to the Philippines next year.

Congress also appropriated \$15 million for humanitarian assistance to the Afghans this year, but none of that money has been spent yet. And the Defense Department budget also includes \$10 million to pay for the transportation of goods to the Afghan rebels.

Such spending has encountered considerable skepticism among many Democrats and some Republicans who fear that the President is blindly following an ideological goal without fully considering the consequences of drawing the United States into a wide variety of unwinnable little wars in the Third World.

"I think it is a formula for political and military disaster," Solarz said. "We all agree that the Communists are bad guys, but it has to be decided on a case-by-case, country-by-country basis primarily in terms of what best serves America's best interests."

Congress halted military aid to the Nicaraguan rebels in late 1983 after members learned that the CIA had been involved in a number of questionable activities such as mining a Nicaraguan harbor. Likewise, the House is expected to vote next month on a proposal by the Democratic leadership to end covert assistance to Savimbi.

The President has succeeded in softening some of this opposition with his frequent pledges to seek a diplomatic solution while continuing to finance regional conflicts.

"Support to resistance forces does not undermine our commitment to negotiated settlement," Reagan said recently. "On the contrary, strong resistance movements can only increase the likelihood of bringing Communist rulers to the bargaining table."

In addition, the apparent popular appeal of the President's support for anti-Communist "freedom fighters" has left some of his Democratic opponents groping for an alternative policy. Just last year, a group of Democrats led by Solarz sought to improve their anti-Communist credentials by declaring support for rebels opposing the occupation of Cambodia by the Soviet Union's client state, Vietnam.

The Administration was already giving \$5 million in covert military aid to the Cambodian rebels, according to sources, when Solarz jumped on the bandwagon with legislation offering another \$5 million in overt assistance for humanitarian purposes.

Some Republicans ridiculed the move. Kirkpatrick called it "an effort at political adaptation" by the Democrats, and Rep. Henry J. Hyde (R-Ill.) joked, "The Solarz Doctrine calls for helping any resistance group that is eight time zones away."

Still, Democratic support for the Cambodian rebels was a sign of shifting sentiment in Congress. And, when the Democratic-controlled House voted 221 to 209 on June 26 to approve Reagan's long-embattled military aid package for the *contras*, the first affirmative House vote for contra aid in nearly three years, the Reagan Doctrine finally appeared to have achieved the support of a bipartisan majority.

### Keeping Option Open

"There is now a working majority in Congress for the concept that the United States should keep open the option of helping democratic resistance fighters," declared Alfred M. Lehn, foreign policy analyst for the Senate Republican leadership.

Hoping to capitalize on this shift, Republicans quickly began drafting legislation that would declare the Reagan Doctrine as the law of the land. According to Lehn, Dole intends to introduce the bill later this year with the goal of having it enacted by the 100th Congress, which will convene next January.

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Dole's legislation would lay out criteria for the Administration to use in deciding whether to support a particular counterinsurgency.

"We start with the proposition that whatever we do should be in the U.S. interest," said Lehn, who has been drafting the bill.

Among other things, the measure would instruct the Administration to support anti-Communist resistance groups deemed to have a reasonable chance of winning, espouse democratic values, represent a viable alternative to the current Communist government and enjoy international or regional support—provided that aiding them will help bolster the security of the United States.

Yet even many supporters of the Reagan Doctrine, including top Administration officials, are skeptical that any such criteria should be written into law.

"I would argue against it," Lugar said. "I have a feeling that in most foreign policy situations, these neat rules never quite fit. You're better off to have some general principles, such as you are going to contain Soviet adventurism and promote democracy. Those two general rules fit many situations."

Critics of the Reagan Doctrine are quick to point out that none of the four insurgencies now being aided by the Administration fulfills all the criteria for support outlined by proponents of "freedom fighter" legislation.

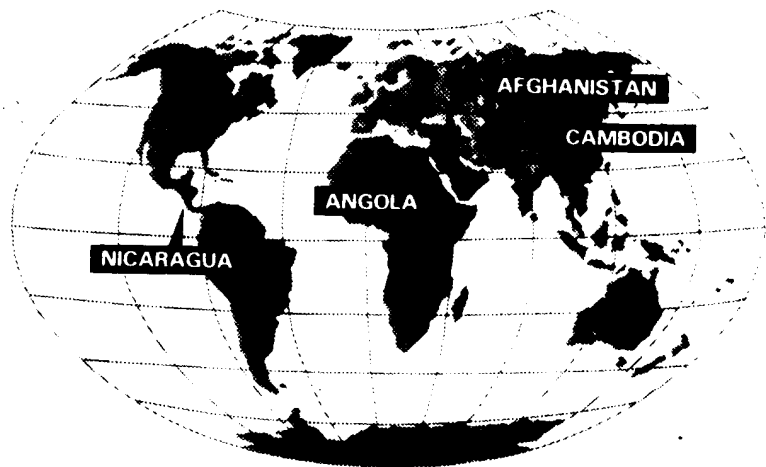
In Afghanistan, for example, many of the guerrilla fighters who now receive U.S. aid are Islamic fundamentalists with no commitment to establishing a democracy.

#### **'A Motley Bunch'**

"These guys are not democrats," Hamilton said. "They are fanatics; they are a motley bunch."

Nevertheless, there has been little opposition to aiding the Afghan rebels, who are more generally viewed as a dedicated band of warriors intent on fighting Soviet occupation to the death.

## **ANTI-COMMUNIST INSURGENCIES WITH U.S. BACKING**



### **Afghanistan**

Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in December, 1979, to stabilize the Afghan Marxist government in Kabul, which took power in an April, 1978, revolution, against pro-monarchy traditionalists and Muslim fundamentalists. The continuing civil war has become known as the "holy war" to the thousands of Afghan rebels, who hold much of the countryside against an estimated 115,000 to 120,000 Soviet troops and at least 50,000 Afghan government troops. The rebel *mujahideen*, or holy warriors, are composed of at least seven major factions, mostly Muslim fundamentalists, and are backed by the United States, Pakistan, China and Iran. They are using principally Chinese-made weapons, many bought by the United States.

### **Angola**

The Marxist government of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), came to power in November, 1975, after a civil war following the withdrawal of a Portuguese colonial government. The Soviet- and Cuban-backed government supports 110,000 troops against the U.S.- and South African-backed National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which claims about 40,000 guerrillas and has opposed the MPLA in what began as tribal fighting but is now full-fledged civil war.

### **Cambodia**

The Vietnamese-installed, Soviet-backed government in Phnom Penh took control in 1979 and holds power with the support of an estimated 140,000 Vietnamese troops. Former Cambodian leader Prince Norodom Sihanouk leads the three-member Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, which is recognized by the United Nations and backed by China. In addition to Sihanouk's 11,500 fighters, former Cambodian Prime Minister Son Sann leads the non-communist Khmer People's National Liberation Front of 14,000 rebels. The third member of the coalition is the communist Khmer Rouge forces of Pol Pot, which claim more than 35,000 guerrillas. The present Cambodian government succeeded the brutal Khmer Rouge regime, in power from 1975-78, which had ousted the pro-U.S. Lon Nol government, in power from 1970-75.

### **Nicaragua**

The Marxist-led Sandinista forces overthrew dictator Anastasio Somoza in July, 1979. The Soviet-backed Sandinista forces, numbering about 100,000, continue to fight U.S.-backed counterrevolutionary guerrillas, known as *contras*, which include several local factions, including the Miskito Indians from the northern regions of Nicaragua, and estimated to number between 15,000 and 22,000. Soviet Bloc nations, including Cuba, have aided the ruling Sandinista National Liberation Front in the conflict, while the *contras* have drawn upon surrounding Central American countries, such as Honduras, to provide sanctuary.

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In Central America, the contras now hold no Nicaraguan territory and are given little chance of actually bringing down the government, even with a massive influx of U.S. aid. Nor do they have the expressed support of other countries in the region or around the world.

But Reagan has argued for the aid on grounds that U.S. security is jeopardized by having a Soviet client state in Nicaragua—as he puts it, just a two-day automobile drive from Harlingen, Tex. The objective of U.S. aid to the contras is to force the Sandinista government to agree to restore basic democratic freedoms.

In Angola, the stated goal of U.S. aid to UNITA has been to force the withdrawal of Cuban and Soviet troops. But critics contend that the United States has no compelling strategic interests in Angola, and the aid has what critics view as an unfortunate side-effect of aligning the United States with South Africa, also a Savimbi ally and supplier.

In Cambodia, U.S. security interests are considered to be even weaker than in Angola. Critics note that there is no way of knowing

whether American aid is being received by the dreaded Khmer Rouge, which ruthlessly ran the country in the late 1970s.

Yet supporters of the aid argue that it is needed to protect the surrounding ASEAN nations from Hanoi's aggression and to make Cambodia what Solarz calls "Vietnam's Vietnam."

Beyond such narrow issues, U.S. policy-makers do not agree on whether Reagan's support for anti-Communist rebels has had any impact on Moscow's behavior so far.

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**—Rep. Henry J. Hyde**  
(R-Ill.)

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Kirkpatrick asserted that there has been no evidence that the Soviets are pulling back in response to U.S. policy.

"My view is that the Reagan Doctrine has increased Communist presence in Central America," Hamilton said. He noted that the President no longer brags that no nation has gone Communist "on my watch."

"Nicaragua has become Communist on his watch," Hamilton said. "I believe that we have forced the Sandinistas into the arms of the Communists by our policy."

But Lugar and other U.S. officials insist that U.S. assistance has succeeded in raising the cost of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan,

Nicaragua, Angola and Cambodia—and thus has discouraged the Kremlin from embarking on further adventures.

It is estimated that at least 10,000 Soviet troops have been killed fighting the increasingly effective resistance in Afghanistan since 1979. And, while the leaders of Nicaragua have failed to "cry uncle" as Reagan has suggested, Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos recently pleaded for a meeting with him in an effort to bring peace to that war-torn country.

The true test of the policy may come when the interests of the United States diverge from those of the U.S.-backed rebels, Sen. Dave Durenberger (R-Minn.) predicted. He asked: "What are we going to do for Savimbi if Dos Santos says yes? Do we leave them hanging out there?"

No matter what the results so far, the Administration seems ready to expand the policy in the near future, possibly to extend U.S. aid resistance forces in Mozambique, and officials acknowledge that their annual aid requests will continue to increase for rebels in Angola, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Nicaragua.

And, with opposition apparently dwindling, there is little doubt that the Reagan Doctrine will be a centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy long after Reagan has retired to his California ranch. As Assistant Defense Secretary Richard Armitage explained, "Once we have extended aid, the recipients should have a reasonable expectation that the aid will continue."

**Next: Congress and the Administration battle for control of aid to insurgents.**